7 Knowledge Asset Management: Know-Net and Beyond

7.1 Introduction

The management of organizational knowledge has drawn the attention of academics, consultants and practitioners as a key lever for improving performance, boosting productivity and creativity, and facilitating innovation in organizational settings. The methods, tools and the actual knowledge management (KM) implementations in various companies have mainly followed one of two perspectives, which in this book are called the process-centric and the product-centric approaches. The former is primarily people-based and treats KM as a social communication process; the latter is mostly content-based and focuses on knowledge-related artefacts. This book presents a knowledge asset-based KM solution that attempts to fuse these two approaches in a balanced manner. The previous chapters of the book presented the individual components of the KM solution, i.e. a management framework, a knowledge leveraging method and an intranet-based tool, as well as their application in five companies.

This chapter explores the ways through which the components of the KM solution address the product and process perspectives to KM and analyzes the links and associations between these components. Finally, in the belief that the management of knowledge assets can be a key driver for organizational as well as societal performance, some avenues for future research and technological development are proposed, which build on and further exploit the basic conceptual structures.

7.2 Knowledge Assets as a Key Link for Holistic KM

7.2.1 Integrating the Product- and Process-centric Approaches in the Know-Net Solution

The three components of the Know-Net total KM solution – the framework, the method and the tool – have clear and consistent interdependences, which exploit the knowledge asset-centric nature of the solution and facilitate the amalgamation of the process- and product-centric perspectives to KM. Figure 7.1 highlights the overall interdependences of the Know-Net framework, method and tools.

The Know-Net framework can be used as an awareness tool as well as for developing a common language among the people of a company. By focusing on key
knowledge assets the framework is useful as an enabler for discussing which are the critical knowledge areas, which ones are underdeveloped and should be further enhanced, and which are already valuable and should be protected and cultivated. In addition, the elements of the framework (strategy, structure, processes, systems) help to share a first draft picture of the level of knowledge awareness within the company. Finally, the first discussions about KM should focus on the various levels for leveraging knowledge assets (i.e. individual, team, organizational and inter-organizational levels) to help to identify possible areas for intervention. These rough analyses can provide useful input for the application of the Know-Net method (especially Stage I: Plan), as well as facilitate the smooth introduction of the concepts and terms used in the Know-Net tool.

The application of the method may be tightly linked to the use, customization and roll-out of the Know-Net tool. However, each one of the two (method and tool) is also self-sustained and can be independently applied: the method has already been applied to companies without the use of the tool.

The coupling between the method and the tool is mainly accomplished through the eight modules of stage II of the Know-Net method, as outlined in Table 7.1. As described in Chapter 3, each module of stage II is a self-contained, value-adding entity and therefore not all modules are mandatory in a KM effort. Ideally, however, just as the knowledge assets are the main unifiers of the approach, module 7 (develop the knowledge asset schema) acts as the frame of the Know-Net method that is being constructed with input from the “audit” modules (1, 3 and 5), while it supports the consistent execution of the “design/implement” modules (2, 4 and 6).